

FACT SHEET: SENATE BILL 577

SENATOR FRAN PAVLEY

EMPLOYMENT EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY FOR PERSONS WITH AUTISM AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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THE PROBLEM

People with disabilities who work in paid, community integrated settings have a higher quality of life, better health outcomes, more access to social relationships, and greater community participation. In addition, they use less publicly funded healthcare, less publicly funded services and resources and they pay taxes.

Yet, in 2009, based on Employment Development Department data, only 14% of working age regional center clients were employed. The 2010 National Core Indicators survey of over 8,724 regional center clients indicated that less than 5% of those surveyed had a job in an integrated competitive employment setting (pays over minimum wage with working conditions parallel to those of a person without developmental disabilities).

Not only are these Californians lacking integrated employment opportunities, but the rate structure for service delivery has unreasonably encouraged the placement of people with developmental disabilities in non-work services and segregated low paying jobs. Additionally, day program service categories are not designed for job preparation and search activities that would lead to integrated competitive employment.

The current funding structure of supported employment services does not provide sufficient pre-employment services to allow in-depth exploration of the individual's interests and potential. Additionally, the funding structure does not allow the employment provider to do sufficient targeted outreach and job analysis with potential employers on behalf of the individual to secure employment opportunities that maximize the individual's potential. The current funding structure

often results in limiting the career starting point of the individual as well as his or her long-term vocational success.

BACKGROUND

Last year's moratorium for new admittance to state run Developmental Centers is evidence that the Legislature and state are moving toward community integrated settings to serve individuals with disabilities. Supported employment services have proven to provide a less costly service that increases independence and quality of life for individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities. However, in 2008 Supported Employment was cut by 10% and has since seen no restoration of that cut.

THE SOLUTION

Senate Bill 577 would increase opportunities for individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities to gain community employment and career advancement. SB 577 would expand the employment services offered to individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities by creating a "Job Exploration and Discovery Service" to better match the individual with his or her preferred job and to assist them in reaching their maximum earning potential. The Job Exploration and Discovery Service would be administered by the Department of Developmental Services.

Under SB 577, the Job Exploration and Discovery Service would be designed to support individuals in achieving their highest vocational outcome and could include: work experience (such as internships and volunteer opportunities), job exploration, targeted

employer outreach, resume development, interviewing skill development, post-secondary support, including technical/vocational schools, and assistance in overcoming social barriers to employment (like appropriate social cueing, executive functioning, grooming, mobility and stamina).

SB 577 would also establish a pilot program, which would include the creation of an Employment Growth Fund, to help individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities as they start to achieve greater vocational success. The Employment Growth Fund would accumulate State savings generated when the individuals covered by this bill: a) move onto employer paid health benefits and/or, b) earn regular wages over the SGA (Substantial Gainful Activity level) and, c) the employment services the individual receives are less costly to the State than traditional non-work day services. The “Employment Growth Fund” would be used to make milestone (outcome) payments to employment service providers as the individuals they support achieve either employer paid health benefits and/or wages over the SGA.

SUPPORT

California Disability Services Association (Sponsor)